

Read

Nehemiah Views the Wall of Jerusalem

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. 13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but *there was* no room for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. 16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to *this* good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *of it*, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What *is* this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

[*The New King James Version*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ne 2:11–20.

Welcome to God's Word for You, a Ministry of Sharon RP Church in Southeast Iowa. Want to thank you for listening today, and we pray that you'll be blessed by both hearing God's word as well as having it applied to your life and your heart.

It's not very often I say it's a good thing we don't know how to sing a psalm well, but I mean that in all reality. That should be a song that's hard to sing because it's a dirge. And as we turned Nehemiah, chapter two, beginning at verse eleven. Nehemiah has, so far, given us a great deal of hope, but also a great deal of sadness, and here that continues. Here the reality of life hits Nehemiah in the face, and we have to face it as well. So turn in your Bibles with me now to Nehemiah, chapter two, and this morning will be reading versus eleven through twenty.

Remember, Nehemiah in the first chapter had found out about the state of Jerusalem, had made his prayer to God. Last week in the first part of Nehemiah, chapter two, it was Nehemiah asking the king to go to Jerusalem and to rebuild the graves of his father's. And here we find the continuation of that story.

Nehemiah, chapter two, beginning at verse eleven. “So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem, nor was there any animal with me except the one whom I rode. And I went out by night through the Valley Gate, to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and its gates were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done. I had not yet told the Jews, the priest, the nobles, the officials or the others who did the work. Then I said to them, you see the distress that we're in now, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be of reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which had been upon me. And also the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to this good work. But when Sandballat the Horonite, Tobias the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?’ So I answered them and said to them, “The god of heaven himself will prosper us. Therefore, we his servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage, or right, or memorial in Jerusalem.” Thus end this portion of the reading of God's word. The grass withers, the flower fades. But the word of our God endures forever.

Well, there's one thing, if my wife gives me a task, that I dread to do: go downstairs and see how the kids have cleaned. There is one thing I dread is Going, is walking down those stairs and knowing what I'm about to find. Knowing that a few hours earlier we told them, “Go downstairs and clean the big room and your room's; pick up all the toys,” because we all know what's really going to be down there. Every once in a while they surprise us, but you have to be careful for the Legos that will pierce your feet. You know the blocks are going to be there, but you know you got to go down and actually inspect that because work needs to be done; things that need to be put back in order. Things that are broken need to be reassembled.

And this isn't just downstairs in kids play-rooms, but even in entire areas of our country. Even in entire areas that have been demolished by hurricanes. There have been a flood of investigators, of reporters, of nonprofit organizations who have flocked to the Bahamas in the last week because Hurricane Dorian has decimated the area. Why do people have to go to Nassau? Why do people have to go to Freeport, Bahamas now? Because we need to know how bad things are. What's it going to take to rebuild? We need to go, we need to send people to figure out is their power, is there water, is it safe to live there? And this is what Nehemiah finds himself doing; going to a city that's laying in ruins and figuring out what needs to be done. How bad is the damage?

Now this is something we would normally like to do. We normally just like to be in “okay places”, even with our own lives, right? We're okay. Well, your call this morning is to inspect the walls of your own faith, inspect the walls of your own faith. So, as we look through Nehemiah's inspection, we're going to start at verse 11. When he first comes into the city in verse 11, he doesn't immediately jump into what he's supposed to do. He's traveled over 500 miles from Susa, has taken him at least five months of travel, and when he gets there, he rests for three days. He doesn't just jump right into it, but he comes in, most likely on the northern route, comes through the Sheep Gate and most likely already has a view of what's going on in the northern part of the

city, but he rests. He stays there for three days. But then after he has stayed there for three days, he realizes he needs to do an inspection of the wall, but not everybody can know what's going on. And in verse 12 that's what he does. He goes, and he only takes this one animal with him. Remember, the king had sent him with a host of horses, with a whole bunch of soldiers to make sure he was safe as he was coming into the city going through the territory. But when he goes out on this moonlit inspection, he goes out by himself and just a few other men. He goes out with most likely just a donkey or a mule. He's not going to ride his steed. It doesn't say that he rides his horse. There's a specific word for that in Hebrew. Instead of just says he rides his beast, most likely a mule. You don't want the horse at night to snort and alert people that someone is lurking out looking at the walls. He's keeping this in. He's looking at the foundation stones. He's looking at the walls, He's inspecting the gates and he gives us a list of some of the places that he inspects.

Look with me at versus 13 through 15 at some of these places he goes during this midnight inspection, "And I went out by night, through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well, and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates, which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate into the King's Pool. But there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall. Then I turned back and entered the Valley Gate and so returned." We're going to be going through what some of these places were. And normally I don't give you maps and your bulletins, but I don't want you to be searching for one in the back of your Bible. So you could, on the southern border and along the eastern borders, where we're going to be looking at where Nehemiah is inspecting. And the first place he goes out is the Valley Gate in the southeast corner of the city, and he goes out that southeast gate, that gate that overlooked the valley to the west, sorry southwest gate. He looks out that over that valley, and he begins his circuit south and eastward. And as he makes this circuit, he comes first to the Serpent Well. We're not exactly sure where this Serpent Well is, some of your Bibles might call it the Dragon's well. We don't know exactly where this is. This is the only mention of this while in the entire Bible. They're archaeologists who try to figure out which one this is. All we know is by his other notes that he's going this way around the city. But as he keeps going, he comes to the Refuse Gate, and he stops there. Some of your Bibles might call it the Dung Gate. You know what happens at this gate? There's a law in Israel. This is, there's no indoor plumbing. There's a law in Israel, if you need to go to the bathroom, guess where you go...out the dung gate. If you have trash, that needs to be thrown out. If you've cooked an animal and there's bones and there's fat renderings and stuff, guess where you would go out of the city to throw all that. You would go out of the Dung Gate and you would throw it out into the valley. This is the valley that Jesus calls Gehenna when he tries to give us a picture of what God's punishment is going to be of hell. It's in that valley that they burned their trash and they burned their feces; where they burned the refuse. So what's going on in the city then? Think about that. If people can't get out of the Dung Gate, if they can't get out of the Refuse Gate, what does a city look like then?

I'm not sure how many of you have seen pictures of other foreign countries. We live in a really cool country. Right, we have trash bags, I take out the trash, I take it outside, I put it in a trashcan, and someone takes it away. And if you live in the country, you have enough space where you could walk outside to your burn pit and you can light it on fire and it's gone. But imagine if everybody in a city, in a compact city, is trying to burn their trash in the streets; or

everybody is trying to take care of their own human waste in whatever way they want to take care of it. It's not a pretty sight. This is what Nehemiah finds himself inspecting. The Dung Gates had been burned down. The Refuse Gate is no longer usable, and he continues to go around, and he goes to the Fountain Gate, which is only about 100 cubits away. And again, that gate is burned with fire. Why is it a big deal that the gates are burned with fire? There's no protection for a city if there are no gates. At any point any enemy can come into the city and lay it to waste. The walls are demolished, the city and the gates are burned with fire.

And as he continues, he goes into the valley, the Kidron Valley, and he starts heading north. But when he gets to the King's Pool, when he gets to what's most likely the pool at Silo, he gets there and you can't go anymore. There's a steep embankment of Jerusalem on that eastern wall and the city used to be held up by that wall, the city used to be held up and all sorts of houses would go up the valley, up to the ridge. But when that wall came down, when the Babylonians destroyed the city, all the houses and all the rubble came down the valley with it. There's so much rubble in the valley that he can't ride his horse, he can't ride his beast anymore. He has to get up and walk by foot as he's inspecting. He's coming to realize this, everything's a complete ruin. Everything's ruined. The city is defenseless. So he returns. But he hadn't said anything, to anyone. Verse 16. That's what he tells us, "...and the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done. I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the others who did the work." Nehemiah hadn't told anyone, this had been a secret mission, because there as we'll find out later in the book of Nehemiah, not everyone wants the Jewish people to succeed. Not even all the Jewish people want the Jewish people to succeed, and we'll get to that. But there are, there are traitors in the city. And so, as Nehemiah spends this time, he doesn't tell anyone what's going on.

But then the day comes when he does. Then the day comes in verse 17 the first part of 17 where he does tell the officials. "Then I said to them, You see the distress that we are in. How Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire." Nehemiah has inspected the rubble Nehemiah has seen the disaster, Nehemiah has estimated the damage, and he has come to the people and say, It's ruined. It's all a waste. You're living in it, look around you. And then he gives him a challenge. Stop living like this. It's time to build. It's time to build. And that's what we find in the second part of verse 17. "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be of reproach, and I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me and also the king's words, which he had spoken to me. So they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' So they set their hands to the good work." Nehemiah tells them to build, and he tells them of God's hand upon him and of the king's words that we're giving him the authority to do this. And the people say, Let's do it, Let's work. Let's stop being a reproach. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy for them. That doesn't mean it's going to be easy for them. Sandbalot, Tobiah, and Geshem do not want a successful Jewish people there, they don't want it. And so they mocked them and ridiculed them in verses 18 through 20 they mocked them and ridiculed him. "What's this thing you're doing? Are you really rebelling against the King?" I think about that charge. Are you really rebelling against the King? This is treason! They're charging them with treason. And as our founding fathers knew full well traitors, people who create treason are...Traitors are hung.

Nehemiah has confidence in his God. How does he respond to them in verse 20? "So I answered them and I said to them to God of heaven himself will prosper us. Therefore, we his servants will arise and build. But you have no heritage, no right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." You have no,

you have no memorial. You have no right to the religious practices that happen at the temple. You have no share. You don't have any right to any of this land here. This is ours. The King has given it to us. And the King of Kings gave it to us in Genesis 17. And you have no share. You're not citizens of this land. Tobiah, you're an Ammonite. Sandbalot, you're a Horonite, you're the governor of Samaria! Geshem, you're the king of the southern country, you have no right here.

Okay, this is wonderful. Now we need to stop. Great lecture. Good job. Most of you. Most of you stayed awake. Wonderful. What does this have to do with you? What does this have to do with your life? How does this translate into a new covenant setting? It's high time for us to take an inspection of the walls of the American Church. It is high time for us to inspect the walls of the American Church! If we looked at the Eastern Valley Wall of the family, we would no longer see a strong wall, a buttress, to care for the Church of God! But instead our Children are sent away in the other rooms to go learn little silly Bible stories and not get the meat of God's word, to not be challenged about their sin. The family as that bulwark against the temptations of Satan, those Children are now ripped away from the church, and they're sent away to sports and leisure on Sunday instead hearing the very words of life! We entertain our Children rather than building them up. When we look at the Serpents Well, pastors are no longer willing to go to this place and to warn people that this is a place of poison. Instead, pastors in the American Church are too well satisfied with building up their own empires, with letting people sit comfortably in their chairs and not be challenged about the serpent who would be wanting to devour them. The American church, its walls and its wells are ruined and poisoned. If we kept going to the Dung Gate, pastors are afraid to take their people there.

Ministers in our own country are all too willing to preach sermons about self-help and about how you can have a better life but are afraid to tell people you must repent from your sin. You need to take your garbage, your dung, your refuse, you need to get it out of your city! We're all too willing, and our church is now, to not mention that sin is sin, and that refuse has no place in our Christian hearts. What is the garbage that we put up with in the church that pastors and elders and deacons and members are too scared to talk to the people sitting in the pews next to them about? Do we care more about keeping the disgusting piece rather than telling people, "Hey, I got garbage to take out of my own life, too. But God says that this is gross, and we need to get it out of here."

How often have we seen in the American church, where pastors do not desire to bring the people to the King's Pool, but instead they want to have people soak up their own words? The day of celebrity pastors in America needs to die! We need not pastors who are kings of their church, but pastors who are servants to bring the people of God to their King. This is what the King's Pool was, where the king would go and he would refresh his people with flowing water. Do the pastors of our churches today bring their people to the living water of Jesus Christ that will satisfy them for all their lives?

It's high time we start inspecting the walls of the American church!

The terraces have been torn down. The Valley of Evangelism is filled with rubble.

There used to be a day in our country where we could look at those evangelists who would go out, who would, who would go out in the armor of God and His face would shine upon that

helmet of salvation, and that shield of faith, and that breastplate of righteousness as they were shod with the feet of the gospel, and they would carry it out without fear. But the American church today, sadly, would rather cling onto a dying past, then put on the armor ourselves to get off our high horses and a walk in the rubble. Are we willing to inspect the walls? Will we look at the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and set our hands to rebuild based on his plan. But even if we turn it away from the churches out there, because we all know we're a "perfect church." None of those things, none of those things point to us, right? No! Let's turn it inward at our own hearts here.

What is the citadel of holiness look like in your life? When you inspect in your own life that citadel of holiness, is the mortar of prayer dry and cracking because the fires have burned it out? Are the stones of Bible reading crumbling and missing from your life? When you look at your daily life, when you inspect your own soul and your own habits, are you looking at a strong citadel, or is it a pile of stones loosely put together? Are they even stones anymore? Have you been building with clay or with straw? Or have you been building upon the rock of Jesus Christ with the power of the Gospel? What is the work of your own soul? Have you visited the Dung Gate lately? In your own life have you made a trip purposely to inspect your own soul to look at your own life and I say there is something wrong here and I need to get this garbage out of here! Or have we just gotten used to the stench of our own sin? Don't get, don't get me confused here, don't think I'm speaking hyperbole, this is exactly what God thinks of our sin: Our pornography, our greed, our covetousness, our materialism, our back biting, our anger, our impatience, our drunkenness. Pick your sin, how does God look upon it? *disgusted* Filth! Will you remove it? Be under no disillusion, if the Holy Spirit lives in you. If you are a child of God, it is your chore to take out the garbage. Is your garbage can overflowing? Time to pull up those strings and go take it out of the house.

Have we and our own lives neglected the garrison upon the wall of fellowship? Have we thought we could do this whole Christian living thing on our own and forgotten all the "each others" of scripture? As we build each other up, as we encourage each other, as we love each other, as we must be the church militant together, caring for each other. Or in our own lives would we rather just go on our own way and do our own thing? Brothers and sisters do not neglect the garrison of fellowship. It is together that we are comrades in this battle.

As we inspect this Serpents' Well, we need to take light of our own hearts. Where is the poison we have put in our own waters? Where are the unbiblical patterns in our life that we need to get out? And brothers and sisters let me end with this:

Come to the King's Pool.

Will you come and drink from the water that will always satisfy your soul?

How long has it been since you came to the Lord and soaked in his goodness? Reveled in the richness off his mercy? Rejoiced in His Majesty? Stood in all of his grace? How often are you coming to the King's Well in prayer? How often are you drawing deeply of the hope of salvation? How often is your soul being refreshed by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? How often are you coming to that pool? Brothers and sisters the question for you is same question Nehemiah had to ask, "Will you build?" Will you build the walls of your faith? Will you build

the walls of this church by the sweat of your brow? Will you take stock honestly of where you live and what you're doing? Will you be those who stand in the face of ridicule and mocking and say "God's hand is upon me and he's given me work to do!" I pray that's your answer.

Let's pray together now, "O Lord we thank You so much for not hiding from us our sins, for not hiding from us our cracks, the faults in our foundation. Lord we pray that we would love You and that we would search after You. Father, that we would keep Your law. Lord that we would love You with all of our hearts, mind, soul and strength, and we would love our neighbor as ourselves. Father, please give us energy to do the work that You have called us to do. Lord we plead with You that we would not grow weary of doing good, but that Your kingdom might come and that your will might be done in our lives and in our day and age. Please Lord, for Your glory, let Your hand rests heavy upon us. Give us favor, in Jesus' name, amen."

Let's sing in response. Psalm 147, Psalm 147 selection A, and we'll be singing stanzas 1, 2, 3, and also 7. So stanzas one through three and then seven. Please stand if you're able as we sing together. Psalm 147 selection A.

Thank you for listening to God's Word for You. A ministry of Sharon RP Church in Morning Sun, Iowa. We pray that you would be blessed as you grow in your love for God, your love for his word, as well as your love for his people. Until next week , God Bless You.